

THE BLOCK HOUSE, Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1843;  
architect Martin E. Thompson.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1, Lot 10 in part, consisting  
of the land on which the described building is situated.

On December 27, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission hold a public  
hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of The Block House, Governors  
Island and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site (Item No. 34).  
The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law.  
In a letter to the Commission, the Coast Guard questioned the proposal to desig-  
nate the building, saying that Federally-owned property is not subject to  
regulation by local law.

#### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

In its severe classic simplicity, this almost square, two-story Greek Revival  
1840 building with basement has superb architectural character. Extremely austere  
in appearance and dubbed the "Block House", this stone trimmed brick structure  
derives its dignity and aesthetic quality from the strict, disciplined scale  
expressed in its components and from the large surfaces of brick interspersed with  
evenly spaced, well-proportioned openings.

The upper two floors of brick construction rest on a wide stone band course  
while the basement below is of rough-cut masonry construction with some brick  
rustication. Surrounding the building is an open arcway, enclosed by a low curb  
and a plain railing. At the roof line a combination of simple moldings with brick  
dentils and a coping of stone crowns the building.

The building, five windows wide, has windows of the double hung sash type  
with plain sills and lintels. A note of richness was added to the wide center  
window of the upper story, with its mullions and sidelights, by the addition of  
an ornate balcony with railing projecting from the wall. A flight of steps,  
contained by large stone blocks and a graceful curvilinear iron railing, leads  
to the entrance doorway. Enframed with plain pilasters and a very low pitched  
pediment of stone, it encloses a Twentieth Century version of the original Greek  
Revival door.

The building is surrounded by brick walks and is set among large trees in  
the Northeast corner of the island. It now contains officers' apartments. Over  
the years the structure has served as a blockhouse, general's headquarters,  
officers quarters and a hospital.

The question has been raised by the Federal Government as to whether this  
building should be designated by New York City as a Landmark. The Commission  
wishes to honor a building of which New Yorkers are proud. The Commission is  
cognizant of the jurisdictional question. Nevertheless, it is very important  
for the Government of New York City to state officially its deep concern that  
this building be preserved. There should be no uncertainty about this in  
anyone's mind.

The Commission would be negligent if it failed to act in this situation.  
At some time in the future this building may be in jeopardy. Our designation  
will be especially helpful in alerting New York City's elected representatives  
in Washington of the importance of saving this building. At present the  
Commission's specialists can be of service in providing advice so that the  
architectural integrity of this building is maintained. Indeed a fine relation-  
ship already exists with many local representatives of the Federal Government.

#### FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and  
other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that  
The Block House has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest  
and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of  
New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, The Block House is a distinguished example of Nineteenth Century Greek Revival utilitarian architecture, that it has excellent proportions and fine scale, that it is extremely well sited, that it served the armed forces of the nation for over a hundred years and that it continues to serve a useful purpose as a multiple dwelling for officers of the Coast Guard.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 8-A of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark The Block House, Governors Island, Borough of Manhattan and designates as its related Landmark Site that part of Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 1, Lot 10 which contains the land on which the described building is situated.